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ABSTRACT

The Australian 1981 Census results show that the coventional nuclear family is still by far the most prominent family form in Australia. However, since the first family statistics were collected in 1966, other family forms and nonfamily living arrangements have been increasing. This paper examines changes in factors determining family structure and discusses the changing nature of Australian families. After a brief discussion of precursors of change (such as increased education for girls, removal of restrictions on the employment of women, the development of birth control devices, rising divorce rates, and increased individualism), marriage in the 1970's and 1980's is discussed. Topics also receiving attention are the decline in fertility from 1971 to 1981 and the increase in divorces in the 1970's. Concluding remarks suggest that, while marriage and family are losing their significance in the public sphere, they are taking on a far greater relevance in the private realm. In addition, it is asserted that the real needs of people are not met or even recognized by those who cry that the family is disappearing or by those who advocate that it should disappear. (RH)

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Discussion Paper Number 11

CAN THE FAMILY SURVIVE?

Peter McDonald

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Change in Australia

Great concern has been expressed in recent times that the family 'as we know it' is rapidly disappearing. The theme has become a rallying point for the new conservatism in all English-speaking countries, and even prominent feminists such as Germaine Greer and Betty Friedan are among those who want the virtues of the family to receive greater recognition.

Well, just how fast is the family disappearing? What are the facts? In Australia, these questions are not easily answered because of the poor state of family statistics. It is an irony that politicians who now express concern about the family have themselves presided over a cut in information on marriages and divorces provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). More importantly, they have neglected to give any priority to the improvement of family statistics collected in the quinquennial population censuses.

Family coding was first introduced into Australian censuses at the 1966 Census and that system has been used ever since, despite its many deficiencies. For example, where a spouse is temporarily absent from home on census night, the family is coded as a one-parent family; or if there are no children, the spouse at home is coded as a person living alone. The spouse who is away on that night, no matter where she or he is staying, is not coded as a member of any family. Also, families living permanently in caravan parks are not coded as families but merely as people living in non-private dwellings. To add to these difficulties, tabulations that would allow some of these coding problems to be sorted out are not consistently available across the censuses. The tale of census family statistics is a sorry one. The few additional questions needed to obtain good census family statistics continue to receive low priority in the face of the battery of 'essential' economic questions.

That aside, although in the census many people who are family members are not recorded as such, the 1981 Census results showed that 85 per cent of Australians were living in families. The remainder were living alone (5.8 per cent), living with other, non-related persons (5.1 per cent), or not living in a private dwelling (4.5 per cent). When such a large proportion of the population was living in families as recently as 1981, how can it be said that the family is disappearing?

Perhaps those concerned about present trends draw a distinction between 'families' and 'the family', meaning the conventional nuclear family of two parents and their children. Besides the conventional nuclear form, families by ABS census definitions include couples living alone, one-parent families, a single mother and her baby, and a range of other possibilities. But again, despite this variety of family forms, 60 per cent of the Australian population (1981 census data adjusted for spouses temporarily absent on census night) do in fact live in conventional, two-parent nuclear families. The variety of other family forms therefore accounts for 25 per cent of the population, which further subdivides into couples with no children (15 per cent), one-parent families (7 per cent) and all other forms (3 per cent). It should be remembered also that many of the families consisting of couples without children are transitional versions of the conventional nuclear family; that is, they are couples who will have children in the future or whose children have all left home.

The statistics, then, show beyond doubt that the conventional nuclear family is still by far the most prominent family form in Australia. But since the first family statistics were collected in 1966, other family forms and non-family living arrangements have been on the increase. The major changes have been a doubling of the proportion of female-headed, one-parent families, an increase from around 10 per cent to almost 20 per cent in the proportion of households consisting of a person living alone, and the increased frequency of couples of all ages living with no children in the household. Also, about one in eight of the two-parent families with children, described in this paper as conventional, are unconventional in the sense that one or both of the parents has been married before. These are changes since 1966. Of course, some of these family forms (such as female-headed, one-parent families and families resulting from remarriages) are not new because they were not uncommon under the high mortality patterns of the 19th century. What is new about them is that the absent partner is not gone forever but may live in the next suburb. The very high frequency of couples with no children present (almost 25 per cent of all households in 1982) has, however, never been experienced to anything like the same extent in Australian history.

Families are formed, altered, and dissolved through individual decisions about births, marriages, separations and divorces, departure from the parental home, and co-residence of members of the extended family, while deaths have an involuntary impact on family type. Recent changes in family types can therefore be traced through the changes in these determining factors. There have also always been families in

Australia based on de facto rather than legal relationships. De facto relationships involving children are still relatively uncommon (in 1982, about 3 per cent of all families with children in the household), but de facto relationships or living-together arrangements have become very prominent among young couples (and probably also among persons who have divorced). This paper will examine changes in the factors that determine family structure and then discuss further the changing nature of Australian families.

The setting for change: the 1950s and 1960s

Despite the stories of governesses and maiden aunts, there is a general sense that traditionally in Australia almost everyone married and had children. The data in Table 1, however, show that this has only applied in recent times, essentially among those born in the 20-year period from 1925 to 1945. These people were marrying and having children primarily in the 1950s and 1960s. Before that much higher proportions of Australian women never married and never had children. Thus the generation now between about 40 and 60, many of whom now decry the decline of the nuclear family, were themselves unusual in the extent to which they formed nuclear families. For this generation also, both in Australia and in other Western countries, age at first marriage was exceptionally low, lower than for centuries of European history. Age at marriage for men in the United States was so low for this generation that only Nepal and India had lower ages. Furthermore, very high proportions of brides from this generation were pregnant at marriage (a peak of around 23 per cent for those marrying in 1963).

For most men and women, marriage also meant leaving the parental home. The generation asserted its independence from parents through sexual activity, pre-marital conception and early marriage. Although they did little to prevent pregnancy outside marriage, in the back of their minds was the knowledge that early marriage did not now imply vast numbers of children. Marriage was freedom. In the words of one of the pop songs of the period: 'Too young to be married, too young to be free.' The words fairly accurately record the attitude of the period. The nub of their behaviour was an unwillingness to delay sexual activity until well on into their twenties as their parents had generally done. The freedom of youth during World War II was a major stimulus to the trend.

Not all, of course, were sexually active before marriage. Many were constrained by moral principles, but even this group began their sexual activity early by marrying early. With the restrictions applied by most

Table 1 Generations of Australian women born from 1861 to 1956

Generation: years of birth of women	*Lifetime average number of live births per married woman*	*Lifetime percentage never marrying*	*Lifetime percentage childless (all women)*
1861-66	5.1	14	21
1866-71	4.6	16	23
1871-76	4.2	17	25
1877-82	3.8	15	23
1882-87	3.6	14	22
1887-92	3.3	14	22
1892-97	3.1	13	22
1898-1903	2.8	13	22
1903-08	2.6	10	20
1908-13	2.6	9	19
1913-18	2.7	7	15
1918-23	2.9	6	13
1923-28	3.1	5	11
1928-33	3.2	5	10
1933-38	3.2	4	8
1938-43	2.9	4	8
1943-48	2.6	5	10
1946-51	2.4	7	15
1951-56	2.4	11	20

Source: McDonald, 1983.
Note: Data for those born from 1943 to 1956 are projections based on their experience up to 1982.

employers until the mid-1960s, marriage meant leaving the labour force for most women. Children thus came early and fast and social life revolved around baby health centres and schools. Overall, fertility levels were increased by this generation, but the contraceptive revolution of the 1960s allowed termination of child-bearing, thus preventing fertility from rising even further. In economic terms, the generation knew full employment (for men, that is) and so, despite early economic hardship, people went into marriage with the confidence that they could better their situation. There was a belief that the early struggle would draw the couple together, and, in fact, divorce rates in Australia actually declined slightly from 1950 through to the mid-1960s.

Many who came through the period now look back upon it with nostalgia and firmly believe that Australia was always that way and should continue to be so. But as we shall see, the extreme conformity of behaviour that marked their early adult years almost inevitably led to the reactions that now influence family formation processes.

The precursors of change

In the 1950s, education levels for girls began to improve, and by the 1960s it was admitted that at least some girls might be educated for useful contributions to the labour force. Girls were taken into teachers' colleges in large numbers to cope with the demands of expanding school populations. It was inevitable that the restrictions on the employment of married women would change. The Commonwealth Public Service changed its regulations in 1966. Younger married women continued to work after marriage, but most withdrew fairly quickly with their first pregnancy. Some strongly intended to return to work when their children reached school age. Later, from the mid-1960s, the pill allowed married women to delay their first birth, thus permitting them to gain greater experience in the workforce and to save money for the house.

In the meantime, the situation was changing for those who had married and had their children early during the 1950s and 1960s. Many married women found themselves still relatively young, with their children grown and their husbands wrapped up in their own interests — often work and career interests. The result was a large-scale return to the workforce. By 1966, one-third of married women in their forties were in the labour force and this percentage has continued to rise, reaching almost 60 per cent by 1981 (Table 2).

It is important to realise that changing family behaviour in the 1970s and 1980s has not been the exclusive province of the post-war birth generation. The attitudes and behaviour of women now in their forties and fifties, the mothers of the post-war birth generation, have had a

Table 2 Labour force participation rates for married women in Australia from 1933 to 1981

Census year	*Age group*									
	15-19	*20-24*	*25-29*	*30-34*	*35-39*	*40-44*	*45-49*	*50-54*	*55-59*	*60-64*
1933	3.2	4.4	4.6	4.8	5.1	5.6	6.0	6.1	5.7	3.7
1947	11.4	11.6	8.3	7.6	8.6	9.1	9.3	7.8	6.6	4.1
1954	17.4	20.1	14.4	13.2	13.4	14.7	14.3	11.7	8.1	4.7
1961	19.9	24.5	17.2	17.4	21.0	21.5	20.3	17.4	12.6	6.5
1966	29.4	37.0	26.0	26.8	31.4	33.7	31.6	26.6	20.0	11.1
1971	36.4	44.1	–33.0–		–41.3–		–36.1–		23.2	12.0
1976	49.4	55.5	44.4	47.1	55.9	57.6	55.6	44.3	32.8	17.1
1981	45.7	57.4	48.4	49.6	56.9	60.0	55.5	45.3	31.3	15.0

Source: Census reports, 1933-81.

Notes: Data for 1933 and 1947 include married women who are permanently separated. Subsequent data include only married women still living with their husbands.

profound influence on younger people. Intensive interviews by the Institute of Family Studies (IFS) in 1982* show that young married people often have very negative images of their parents' marriage. Many regard their parents' relationship as the antithesis of what they would like for themselves.

Also in the latter part of the 1960s, the divorce rate began the long-term rise still continuing. Those who had married young in the 1950s and had held on for years in an unhappy marriage led the way. The *Family Law Act* 1975 could be seen as having achieved respectability because of the uncomfortable experiences of older couples divorcing in the seven years before the Act.

Studies in the US and other English-speaking countries show a clear relationship between divorce and early marriage. Based on experience in Britain, as high as 50 per cent of teenage marriages in Australia are likely to have ended in divorce. The idea that the struggles of the early years of marriage benefited the couple's relationship began to be reversed. Perhaps it was always rationalisation. The trend to early marriage did in fact continue into the early years of the 1970s, but probably only because the pill permitted a delay of child-bearing. Ruzicka and Choi (1981) show that almost 70 per cent of women who married around 1960 had had their first child within two years. This percentage had dropped to below 50 per cent for those marrying around 1970. The 1969 Menhennitt judgement in Victoria and the 1972 Levine judgement in New South Wales opened the way to abortion on demand. Gordon Carmichael (1983) has shown that the impact of these judgements on the proportion of brides pregnant at marriage was immediate and dramatic.

The latter part of the 1960s saw a great deal of fundamental social debate. Conscription, Vietnam, abortion, Catholics and the pill, women's rights, civil rights in the US, and marijuana smoking were all argued about. Much of the debate focused on the rights of individuals to follow their own consciences. The frequent victories of conscience over convention in these matters of high principle were an important precursor to the emergence in the 1970s of more self-interested individualism. These debates were also significant in creating awareness of alternatives. By the time those born in the 1950s were coming of age in the 1970s, the necessary conditions for changes in marriage and fertility behaviour already existed.

* For descriptions of the Institute's Family Formation Study, see IFS *Annual Report*, 1982-83, Chapter 2.

Marriage in the 1970s and 1980s

Several demographic shifts in the 1970s had a major bearing on family structure. As Table 1 shows, about 11 per cent of women born in the years 1951-56 will never marry, and about 20 per cent will never have a child. Furthermore, women born in the 1950s have been marrying much later. The trends towards later marriage and high proportions remaining never married and childless are still continuing.

On present indications, the percentage never marrying is likely soon to reach 20 per cent, as high as it has ever been in Australian history. Of course, this still means that the vast majority, 80 per cent, will marry at some time. In the 1982 IFS survey of Australians aged 18-34, 52 per cent were married, 39 per cent expected to marry or remarry in the future, while only 8 per cent did not expect that they would ever marry or remarry. People's expectations are therefore somewhat higher than projections of current marriage trends would indicate.

Attitudes expressed in the 1982 IFS survey also provide evidence of strong support for marriage as a source of emotional support. Around 85 per cent of both men and women agreed that 'marriage provides love, warmth, and happiness', around 75 per cent agreed that 'marriage is for life', and 81 per cent of men and 74 per cent of women agreed that 'marriage develops a sense of responsibility in you that you wouldn't have otherwise'. However, these rather glowing images of marriage are mixed with some rather uncertain attitudes. For example, a depressing 41 per cent of respondents said there were few happy marriages these days.

Respondents in the survey agreed strongly with strategies to minimise the risks of marrying the wrong person: 70 per cent agreed that people should take at least a year to get to know each other before marrying, 78 per cent said that it was all right to live together without planning to get married, and 63 per cent said that couples should make sure that they are sexually compatible before marrying. While the value of marriage in providing close emotional relationships and a partner for life are acknowledged by the younger generation, they clearly approach marriage with a high degree of caution and uncertainty, speaking with two voices. They do not agree that single people are lonely or that single people miss having close relationships, yet they strongly agree that marriage provides love and affection and that one's closest relationships are in one's own family.

Many have opted for the short-term solution of living together as a couple while putting off marriage decisions. Data on how many people

live together are inadequate in Australia, but there can be little doubt about how widespread these arrangements are. They are a natural extension of the pattern of marrying early but delaying the birth of the first child that emerged in the late 1960s. The demonstration effect of high divorce rates together with the increased economic difficulty of buying a house both operated to shift the earlier pattern of delayed child-bearing within marriage to one of cohabitation. Assurance about contraception was, of course, a prerequisite for both patterns. While people living together may not see their relationship as a trial marriage, it very frequently functions that way. The interesting question is whether this experimentation will lead to lower divorce rates in the future. One would be tempted to predict that this may be the case because obvious mismatches will not result in marriage, and because marriage will be delayed to a later age. On the other hand, to the extent that marriage may be used in an attempt to save failing de facto relationships, one must be less confident that divorce rates will fall.

To summarise, most young people still see marriage as part of their lives. They acknowledge that they would like to have a long-term relationship with one person because they recognise the importance to their lives of a deep emotional commitment. On the other hand, they are cautious, ambivalent, and tentative about marriage. They have rejected the early marriage pattern of the 1950s and 1960s. Rather than the notion of couples discovering each other through marriage, which was prevalent in the earlier period, young people now try to be as certain as possible about partners before marrying. They want to be financially and emotionally secure, to have known their partner for a long time, and, often, to have established sexual compatibility. Living together, while being an expression of independence from the parental generation (as early marriage was in the 1950s and 1960s), provides young people with a testing ground for coming to terms with their tentativeness about marriage. Rather than making one emotional commitment 'for life', they give of themselves little by little, always ready to pull back. De facto relationships and those of childless married couples are usually considerably more egalitarian than marriages in the 1950s and 1960s. The woman does not give up her work and devote herself to child-bearing soon after the relationship begins. Instead, she works, furthers her career, earns her own income and expects her partner to share the household tasks.

The economic recession in the 1970s has reinforced these cautious attitudes to marriage. Young people are reluctant to marry if they are insecure about their economic position. The decision to marry has ceased to be an expression of independence from the parental genera-

tion or the initiation of the parenthood stage of the life cycle. It no longer necessarily involves major changes in the externals of people's lives. Because of this, the decision to marry has become a highly personal decision — the decision to set caution aside and make a lifelong commitment to a partner.

The fertility decline

From 1971 to 1981, the total fertility rate in Australia dropped from 2.95 births per woman to 1.94. The total fertility rate measures the average number of children a group of women would have as they pass through the reproductive ages if they experienced the age-specific fertility rates of a given period. The overall fertility level, therefore, dropped by 35 per cent during the 1970s. In age-specific terms, fertility under 25 dropped by 42 per cent, for ages 25-34 by 26 per cent and for 35 and over by 47 per cent. Thus, while younger women were delaying child-bearing, older women were ending their child-bearing at younger ages. Generally, there is a great reluctance among women to give birth after 35. The reasons are fear of possible medical risks, a belief that the age difference between children and parents should not be too great, and the disruption to women's careers that late child-bearing causes.

It has been suggested that fertility levels will rise markedly when the younger women who have been delaying their births begin to have their children. In fact, the predictions shown in Table 1 for women born in 1951-56 indicate that considerably more women will remain childless throughout their lives (20 per cent), and that the average number of children born to married women will not return to previous levels.

Control over fertility has almost eliminated undesired births. As noted, the proportion of brides pregnant at marriage dropped dramatically in the 1970s. John Caldwell (1982) has pointed out that the number of sterilisations has rapidly increased, and abortion rates are very much higher than average for women over 35 and for divorced, widowed and separated women.

The crucial decision for couples now is whether and when they will have their first child. It is the birth of the first child, not marriage, that now has the greatest impact on way of life. The home ownership question emerges much more powerfully at this point as most Australians prefer that children be raised in a suburban detached house. But the housing finance position has now deteriorated so much, according to Burke, Newton and Hancock (1984) that the couple with one income equal to average male weekly earnings can neither meet the conditions for a

housing loan nor handle the mortgage repayments. On the other hand, a couple who jointly receive one-and-a-half times average male weekly earnings can readily meet the requirements of financial institutions. Among married couples where the wife was aged 25-34 in 1981, the IFS Family Formation Study showed that mean annual income was $28 800 for childless couples and $19 300 for couples with children. The economic dilemma is patently obvious.

Increased childlessness and the delay of the first birth are, however, not simply products of the economic recession. There is also considerable evidence that there have been fundamental changes in sex roles and in the roles of parents that are unlikely to be reversed. At its most basic level, the argument that the age when motherhood was a woman's most important and all-consuming role is over. As Philippe Ariès (1980) puts it, 'the days of the child-king are over. The under-40 generation is leading us into a new epoch, one in which the child occupies a smaller place'.

This trend is reflected in attitudinal changes found in two surveys conducted in Australia: an Australian National University survey in 1971 and the IFS survey in 1982. In the 1971 survey, 78 per cent of married women under 35 agreed with the statement: 'Whatever career a woman may have her most important role in life is still that of becoming a mother.' By 1982, only 46 per cent of the same category of women agreed with this statement. Consistent with this, in 1971, 68 per cent agreed that 'a woman is only really fulfilled when she becomes a mother', compared with 30 per cent in 1982. Furthermore, in 1982 there was virtually no difference between men and women in the level of agreement with these questions. The decreased emphasis on motherhood and support for more egalitarian sex roles were much more pronounced among childless married women than among those with children. Only 9 per cent of childless married women under 35 agreed with the statement that a woman is only really fulfilled when she becomes a mother.

Another indication that delay in child-bearing is not simply a product of the economic recession is the fact that, for women in the range 25-34, childlessness is closely associated with an educated, white-collar parental background and with high education on the part of the respondent. For example, among women aged 25-34 with no education after school, only 17 per cent were childless, while 51 per cent were childless among women with a university or college degree. Intensive interviews of married couples conducted in Melbourne in 1982 showed that most childless couples are not outrightly rejecting children but consider them

as an option they would like to fit into their life plan if possible. The husbands displayed a degree of indecisiveness, as if the decision about children was more their wife's than their own. Thus people usually do not make clear statements that they never want to have children, but it is evident that many will drift into permanent childlessness.

Women work essentially for three reasons: to gain income for their household, for the satisfaction of the work/career, and for economic independence. The pressure to remain in the workforce for all of these reasons is likely to remain strong in the future. The 1982 IFS survey data indicate that the work/career ethic is well and truly imbued in the younger generation of Australian women. The more women work, the more society's structures will be geared to women working. Low fertility is unlikely, therefore, to be merely a temporary phenomenon.

The rising divorce rate

The accompanying Figure shows the startling increase in divorces in the 1970s. Most of these related to marriages before 1970, so that the high divorce rate cannot be considered to have stemmed from new attitudes towards marriage among people now under 35. Clearly those who had

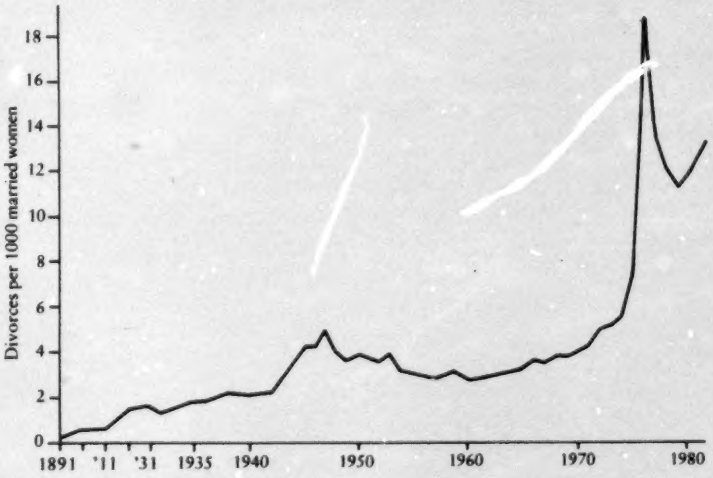

Figure 1 Number of divorces per 1000 married women in Australia, 1981-82

married in the 1950s and 1960s had by the 1970s decided that divorce was an acceptable solution to unhappy relationships. The high divorce rate for this group is partly related to the early age at which many of them married during the 1950s and 1960s. But, in general terms, the causes of this large-scale resort to divorce are not well understood. Further, high divorce rates have continued among those marrying after 1970 to the extent that, when combined, the levels of divorce at each length of marriage in 1982 are consistent with an estimate of 40 per cent of all marriages ending in divorce. This rate of 40 per cent applies to both first marriages and remarriages.

Some of the reasons put forward to explain the high divorce rates are what might be called 'enabling' reasons — that is, that circumstances changed in the 1970s to enable many people to divorce who would previously have either separated or remained unhappily together. One change is an increased social acceptability of divorce based on a rejection of the suppression of self involved in keeping an unhappy marriage going. The IFS survey showed that 90 per cent of people under 35 agreed that those wishing to divorce should be able to do so. Other 'enabling' reasons are the increased economic independence of women, the availability and acceptance of living-together arrangements immediately upon separation, the ease and more civilised nature of divorce in the Family Court, and the supporting parent benefits available to divorced people.

Other reasons offered for the increase in the divorce rate are based on more fundamental social and economic changes in the 1970s. Three main ones are put forward. First, it is suggested that the emphasis on individual satisfaction and achievement that began in the 1960s led to higher expectations about marriage. If sexual, emotional, or material expectations were not realised, then divorce was the solution. Second, the changing marital and sex roles of the 1970s, already discussed, may have introduced new pressures into marriages, particularly when they were embraced more rapidly by wives than husbands. Third, the economic difficulties of the 1970s in terms of housing, unemployment, forced mobility, and the difficulty of balancing work and family roles may have caused dissension between couples.

All of these reasons suggest that, just as the decision to marry has been stripped of its former external trappings to become an internal, personal commitment, so also the continuance of marriage depends upon the maintenance of that emotional commitment rather than the external supports and constraints of the past. The main difficulty with this conclusion as it stands is that children represent a highly significant

'external trapping' of marriages. To what extent does their presence place a constraint upon divorce? As 60 per cent of divorces involve dependent children (and every year about 50 000 children experience the divorce of their parents), it is evident that a sizeable number of marriages breakup despite children. So it seems that the conclusion holds that it is the internal, personal commitment that is the critical factor in divorce.

The increased divorce rates in the 1970s appear to have been associated with the decline in the proportion of divorcees who remarry. Among divorced people in the 1960s, around 70 per cent of both men and women between 25 and 35 at the time of the divorce had remarried within six years. However, between 1971 and 1981, rates of remarriage for people in the same age range have dropped by about 25 per cent. Coding of remarriage data from annual marriage registrations was stopped in 1977, just at the point that the data were taking an added significance. That decision has severely limited our ability to make statements about remarriage trends, and we have little idea about the reasons for a decline in remarriage rates. In the 1981 IFS survey of 18-34-year-olds, among those divorced people who said they did not wish to remarry, the main reason given was disillusionment with marriage. In addition, however, remarriage rates may have dropped because cohabiting or visiting relationships with a new partner now receive a degree of social sanction, or because agreements or orders about property and maintenance or the receipt of social security benefits may depend on the person not remarrying.

Whither families?

Marriage and the family are not on an inexorable downward slide into oblivion. In fact, the most fundamental and intimate values of family life — the emotional, caring relationships between husband and wife and between parents and children — may well now be receiving more emphasis than ever. This is because marriage has been stripped of many of its more peripheral functions. It is no longer the most common point of initiation of sex, of leaving the parental home, of setting up a new household. Family and children are no longer the only point of reference for women. Attitudes of young men and women show that marital and sex roles are changing. Living-together arrangements are providing a testing ground for the quality of emotional relationships. Marriage and family are losing their significance in the public sphere but taking on a far greater relevance in the private. Although the dysfunction caused by rapid change has led to more people living alone, this is by no

means a preferred mode of living for most people. Most want a committed relationship with a partner. The rapid growth of introduction agencies patronised by people of a wide range of ages is tangible indication of this need.

However, because the emphasis has turned to the intimate and personal dimensions, more marriages are breaking up and more people are finding their needs more appropriately met by not marrying or not having children. Young people give tolerance and support to those who voluntarily or involuntarily live in family forms other than the conventional nuclear one. While they display some ambivalence and confusion, they are at least aware that the nature of families and intimate relations has changed. In contrast, the real needs of people are not met or even recognised by those who cry that the family is disappearing or by those who advocate that it should.

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